

D. C. Copeland's

JITTERBUG!

Theatre Student Questionnaire

Creating/Explore

(A)

Process component: Envision/conceptualize

Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical thinking.

Essential question: What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?

Specific *Jitterbug!* questions:

» Where does the choreographer **Clarence Robinson** (the first black person hired by the mob as a choreographer) of the Cotton Club's 1931 revue *Rhyth-mania* get his ideas? As an actor, how would you portray him on stage knowing what you know of the times?

» Where do people from that period dancing at the great ballrooms in Harlem and the contestants at the Cotton Club-sponsored-dance-contest at the Savoy get their ideas? As an actor, how would you portray them at the Savoy? On a Harlem street? On a Manhattan street? Does skin color have anything to do with your portrayal? Would the color of someone's skin matter today?

» How important in conveying the truth is the comport of your character?

» How important is the role of music in discovering your character?

» Are dance steps a product of the times, i.e., are they limited by the style of music? For example, can hip hop be used in swing music? Would a hip hop mentality ring true in portraying a character in *Jitterbug!*?

» Some people believe that the role of the actor should be to confront and challenge our perceptions of what is considered art and truth. If untrained actors/dancers, i.e., teens experimenting with new steps at home or in the clubs or on the streets come up with steps and new styles that push the limits of what has been seen, are they not “artists” too?

» Is there really nothing new under the sun, i.e., are ideas (acting methods/dance steps) just recycled over time? What about “Method Acting”? Were the thespians of ancient Greece method actors?

Prompt: Click this [link](#) to discover one of Thomas Edison's first movies showcasing what looks like break dancing in 1894. The title “Pickaninnies” is reflective of the more overt racist sensibilities of the times which should encourage further discussion among students.

Prompt: Click this [link](#) to discover archival footage of Russian soldiers dancing to Run DMC's *It's Like That*)

» How far can dance be pushed before it becomes repetitive? In *Jitterbug!* the next big thing at that time was the introduction of “air steps” to the Lindy, i.e., Jujitsu dance moves that (for the most part) lifts the woman off the floor and throws her around, over, and under her partner's body. What do you think inspired that kind of dancing? Was it the music? Had it ever been seen before that time?

» Aside from the [Norman Studios](#) founded in Jacksonville, FL (1920-28) which produced films with all black casts in a positive light for black audiences (“race films”), Hollywood at the time of *Jitterbug!* portrayed blacks in virulent racist tones. Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry, known to the world as [Stepin Fetchit](#), was the chief co-conspirator in that regard. He was the highest paid black Hollywood actor at that time. For his work, he became the first black to receive a screen credit and the first to become a millionaire. If *Jitterbug!* had been made in Hollywood in 1931-- as opposed to the Norman Studios-- as an actor, would you-- or could you-- portray any of the characters in the dancical any differently than Stepin Fetchit would have? If you're white, during that period you could have played the lead African American roles provided you did it in [blackface](#). If you're white, pretend you're a product of the times and have been cast as Billy Rhythm (because you can dance). Would you portray him as a man or as a caricature?

Prompt: Click this [link](#) to watch Stepin Fetchit in action.

A-1

a. The 1930's were famous for streamlining just about everything, from cars, to buildings, to clothes. “Less is more”, a phrase coined by [Ludwig Mies van der Rohe](#), a leading architect and proponent of the Bauhaus school in Germany before the Nazi takeover-- they rejected this style as not “German” in character-- sums up the thinking of this approach to design. Search the Internet for style cues-- from this period and sketch out scenery and costumes for a “minimalist” staging of *Jitterbug!*

b. With the advent of [projection mapping](#) and digital lighting, just about anything is reproducible on stage-- provided you have a Broadway style budget. Pretend you do. Sketch out a scene from *Jitterbug!* using the latest technology explaining why you made those choices. Include a less expensive alternative for your “producer” in case he/she refuses to write you a check for your grand vision because his/her number crunching shows making a profit even *without* your grand vision looks less than doable and is beginning to question his/her sanity for ever backing such a demanding production.

c. Create a Character Diary. Start at the very beginning with a backstory that explains who “you” are and how you got to Harlem in the Spring of 1931.

A-2

- a. How would you depict 1931 Harlem on stage? What colors would you choose to convey the zeitgeist and how it influenced the city and its people? How would you show the two worlds of Harlem, the one inside the tenements and the one inside the clubs and ballrooms? How would you light these worlds?
- b. With the advent of [projection mapping](#) and digital lighting, just about anything is reproducible on stage-- provided you have a Broadway style budget. Pretend you do. Sketch out a scene from *Jitterbug!* using the latest technology explaining why you made those choices. Include a less expensive alternative for your “producer” in case he/she refuses to write you a check for your grand vision because his/her number crunching shows making a profit even *without* your grand vision looks less than doable and is beginning to question his/her sanity for ever backing such a demanding production.
- c. Knowing what you know of the times and places found in the dancical, add personal experiences to your character to make him or her come alive in a *realistic* way, to make people think you “own” that role. Be ready to explain your choices either orally or through a written character breakdown. Or both.
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A-3

- a. *Jitterbug!* is a hybrid from the get-go. It borrows from dance, musical theatre, dramatic theatre, and film. As the Director of its Broadway opening, how would you showcase these different theatrical conventions in a visual composition that ties them all together for a scene of your choice?
- b. You're a multiple Tony winner. Your Producer/s is/are willing to give you as much money as you need (well, at least until his/her/their heart/s start to palpitate uncontrollably and he/she/they begin to lose weight because he/she/they can't hold anything down) to realize your vision. Tapping the latest technologies, show your Producer/s he/she/they have nothing to worry about because audiences will be tripping over themselves to buy a ticket to see the spectacle you created called *Jitterbug!* Oh, yeah, just in case your first plan puts your Producer/s in the hospital, create a more realistic (cheaper) back-up plan that will aid in their recovery.
- c. Knowing what you know of the times and places found in the dancical, add personal experiences to your character to make him or her come alive in a *realistic* way, to make people think you “own” that role. Be ready to explain your choices either orally or through a written character breakdown. Or both.

Creating/Develop (B)

Process Component: Plan

Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists work to discover different ways of communicating meaning.

Essential Question: How, when, and why do theatre artists' choices change?

B-1

a. Check out the [Dramaturgy section](#) of www.jitterbug.net for insight into the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in *Jitterbug!* Tell us what you learned.

b. Working within a limited budget for the NYC readings, award-winning director and actress [Petronia Paley](#) and Emmy-nominated choreographer [Jeffrey Page](#) contributed in bringing the printed word to life on stage. Ms. Paley, a multihyphenate (actress-director-playwright-teacher) with many years in New York theatre and TV, was able to bring together a high level of acting talent. Those actors (including Nathan James and Khalil Kain) brought their own histories and acting methods that infused the dancical with truth. Although all were subservient to the director (even the playwright!), all were expected to contribute something from their essential skill set, that sometimes undefinable “thing” that got them the part through the audition. Without collaboration- the give and take in creative choices-- nothing happens, chaos reigns and the play-- or dancial!-- never gets staged. What are you as an actor then willing to do to make it happen? How do you perceive yourself in the process?

B-2

a. *Jitterbug!* is based on thoroughly researched facts and legend. This dramaturgy inspired the structure of the dancical. However, getting from Point A to Point Z, required a delicate balance of mixing truth with dramatic fiction-- and editing out anything that got in the way of telling the story like facts for facts sake which may sap the story of its momentum. This was a point of contention between the director and playwright on *Jitterbug!* (thankfully, the playwright-- the guy writing this questionnaire-- listened). Elaboration has a home on a TV series and possibly an epic film, but live theatre economics requires-- demands-- “less is more” if a production is ever to see the title of the play up in lights on a marquee. Two acts is better than 3 acts, one set is better than many and, sadly but true, less actors the better (doubling is allowed!). Imagine you're a big Hollywood actor/producer who finds scripts and develops them for him or herself. You've already won an Oscar and an Emmy and now you want to develop a property to win a Tony. How could you “refine” *Jitterbug!*, i.e., make it flow better yet still retain its historical and cultural accuracy-- *and still make a profit?* (Hey, you may be uber talented, but you're not about to waste your hard-earned millions either. In the end, its all about the Benjamins).

b. Bring what you know to the party-- the Social Whist Party at Miss Thelma's apartment-- and strut it across her floor. Or the dinner table at Miss Thelma's apartment. But keep it historically correct. That is to say, use the dance inside you, moves that define you, and let them loose on the *1931* dance floor-- or through conversations at the table.

B-3

a. Write and perform a 5-minute monologue based on the fictional and historical characters from *Jitterbug!* They may explore their lives before and after the dancical. For example, what ever happened to Billy and Tharbis? Whatever became of Owney Madden? Emphasis will be on historical and cultural accuracy through research using western or non-western theatre traditions.

b. You're a famous Tony Award-winning producing team. You're preparing *Jitterbug!* for Broadway. Money isn't a problem but you've got two artistic and practical concerns: How do you make the machine gunning death of Mad Dog Coll work night after night? And how do you make the final dance contest scene work in such a way that critics will compare it to the falling chandelier in *Phantom of the Opera*? Candy glass or no candy glass? Explosive squibs or no explosive squibs? Do you wire-up Tharbis and make her fly through the air? Or is any of that necessary? Or maybe there's another part of the dancical you'd like to "reimagine." If so, have a go at it and be ready to explain your choices no matter what "problem" is chosen for your solution.

Creating/Refine

(C)

Process Component: Rehearse.

Anchor Standard: Refine and complete artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal.

Essential Question: How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?

C-1

- a. One girl and two boys perform Act 1, Scene 13 where mobster boss Owney “The Killer” Madden makes his first appearance in the dancical starting at “Where's my dancers?” How would you re-imagine that scene?
 - b. One girl and two boys perform Act 1, Scene 3 where Billy and Madame St Clair have a “conversation” starting when he comes to and sees her sitting in her “throne” and ending with his OS beating. Make us feel those on stage (and off stage) punches. Make us care about Billy.
 - c. One girl and four boys perform Act 1, Scene 2. That scene is staged in the legendary Comedy Club because of its plausibility. Try doing it on a bare stage. Nix the pool table and add a game of craps.
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C-2

- a. One girl and one boy perform Act 1, Scene 10 when Billy and Tharbis are watching the Harlem river. Analyze the choices the playwright made for this scene. What was he trying to convey? How do you make the audience believe the couple is looking at a river? At night? Convince us that street smart Billy Rhythm is a lover of poetry.
- b. Two girls and four boys perform Act 1, Scene 4 when Billy meets the other people renting rooms from Miss Thelma. Why are they there, at that table, at that time? Why does Miss Thelma tell us she isn't feeling too good when she excuses herself from the table? Aside from Billy, would any of them be missed? Would the scene be missed if it was excised by a ruthless director?* What is the playwright trying to convey? Whatever choices you make (aside from cutting the whole scene!), make those still left at the table “real.”
- c. One girl and four boys perform Act 1, Scene 2. That scene is staged in the legendary Comedy Club because of its plausibility. Try doing it on a bare stage. Nix the pool table and add a game of craps. But amp up the emotion. Or re-imagine it in an entirely different way to create new or added emotion.

*Be careful what you cut. Twice the *directors* of *The Wizard of Oz* cut “*Somewhere Over the Rainbow*” from the earliest versions of the film because they thought it made the film too long and slowed it down.

C-3

- a. Bring *Jitterbug!* into the present. Pick a scene and re-imagine it as a hip hop romance. Or Billy channeling Marlon Brando from *The Wild One*, i.e., “Whataya got?” Or Tharbis channeling Beyoncé via Nathan Lane via [Pam Grier](#) in *Austin Powers in Goldmember*. Have fun, but keep it “real.”
- b. Do any scene from the dancical and make it believable, authentic, and relevant.
- c. Do the final two pages of Act 2, Scene 1 starting when the Crowd sets Billy and Tharbis down in front of White. Make it look real on a crowded, jostling dance floor. Make us anxious for Billy and Tharbis.

Performing/Select

(D)

Process Component: Select

Anchor Standard: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists make strong choices to effectively convey meaning.

Essential Question: Why are strong choices essential to interpreting a drama or theatre piece?

D-1

- a. Examine Billy and Tharbis' relationship. How does it assist in telling the story?
- b. Explain Candy, i.e., what makes him tick? What doesn't he want to talk about with Billy? Why is Owney Madden such a bastard? Was it his upbringing? According to the Jets from [West Side Story](#), that's exactly what it was. Show us why it was or wasn't. What about Tharbis? What makes her tick? As an actor, how do you stop Miss Thelma from becoming a stereotype-- any of the characters from becoming stereotypes?

D-2

- a. What unique choices would you bring to *Jitterbug!* as an actor for *your* character to shape believable and sustainable drama/theatre work? To earn you that Tony? To make everyone refer to *your* performance as the best of all time?
- b. Because *Jitterbug!* is a period piece (with lots of pieces missing in the historical record), the playwright added annotations to make the process of discovering that period easier for the actor and director. Without it, would you as an actor have been able to create a believable character? How much does the "truth" learned through research affect your performance? Aside from what the playwright brought to the page, what role does the director play in the process of shaping your character?

D-3

- a. Petronia Paley, who also teaches theatre, has her own style of directing which she brought to *Jitterbug!* Each director brings his or her particular gifts to the interpretation of any dramatic work. Research how another director might approach *Jitterbug!* How about Bob Fosse who started out as a choreographer? Or Julie Taymor who directed *The Lion King* on Broadway? Quentin Tarantino?
- b. You got your Method. You got your Stanislavski System. In fact, according to [Wikipedia](#), you got 28 acting techniques to pick and choose from. Pick at least two and compare how an actor using them would look and sound on stage as your character from *Jitterbug!* Show us!

Performing/Prepare
(E)

Process Component: Prepare

Anchor Standard: Develop and refine artistic technique and work for presentation.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.

Essential Question: What can I do to fully prepare a performance or technical design?

E-1

- a. Practice acting techniques with your character from *Jitterbug!*
 - b. Search for and use technical elements to increase the impact of your design for *Jitterbug!* Explain your choices.
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E-2

- a. Pick and choose from a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable performance for your *Jitterbug!* character.
 - b. Apply technical elements and research to create a design that communicates a theme for *Jitterbug!*
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E-3

- a. Use and justify a collection of acting experiences from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance for your character from *Jitterbug!*
- b. Explain and justify the selection of technical elements used to build a design that communicates a theme for *Jitterbug!*

Performing/Present
(F)

Process Component: Share, Present.

Anchor Standard: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists share and present stories, ideas, and envisioned worlds to explore the human experience.

Essential Question: What happens when theatre artists and audiences share a creative experience?

F-1

a. Choose a scene from *Jitterbug!* and perform it for a specific audience such as a performance for people living in a retirement home or for teen gangbangers in jail. Would those performances be different? Why or why not?

F-2

a. Knowing your audience in advance, what creative processes would you use to shape that production of *Jitterbug!* if your audience is in high school? College? Prison? The KKK?

F-3

a. Present *Jitterbug!* for a specific audience that employs research and analysis grounded in the creative perspectives of the playwright, director, designer, and dramaturg.

Responding/Reflect
(G)

Process Component: Reflect

Anchor Standard: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists reflect to understand the impact of drama processes and theatre experiences.

Essential Question: How do theatre artists comprehend the essence of drama processes and theatre experiences?

G-1

a. Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in *Jitterbug!* to develop criteria for artistic choices.

G-2

a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices in a production of *Jitterbug!*

G-3

a. Use historical and cultural context to structure and justify personal responses to a production of *Jitterbug!*

Responding/Interpret
(H)

Process Component: Interpret

Anchor Standard: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists' interpretations of drama/theatre work are influenced by personal experiences and aesthetics.

Essential Question: How can a work of art communicate different messages to different people?

H-1

- a. Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in roles you played including *Jitterbug!*
- b. Identify and compare cultural perspectives and contexts that may influence the evaluation of *Jitterbug!*
- c. Justify personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of a performance of *Jitterbug!*

H-2

- a. Develop detailed support evidence and criteria to reinforce artistic choices, when participating or observing a performance of *Jitterbug!*
- b. Apply concepts from *Jitterbug!* for personal realization about cultural perspectives and understanding.
- c. Debate and distinguish multiple aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of a performance of *Jitterbug!*

H-3

- a. Use detailed supporting evidence and appropriate criteria to revise personal work and interpret the work of others when participating in or observing a performance of *Jitterbug!*
- b. Use new understanding of cultures and contexts to shape personal responses to *Jitterbug!*
- c. Support and explain aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs to create a context for critical research that informs artistic decisions in *Jitterbug!*

Responding/Evaluate

(1)

Process Component: Evaluate

Anchor Standard: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists apply criteria to investigate, explore, and assess drama and theatre work.

Essential Question: How are the theatre artist’s processes and the audience’s perspectives impacted by analysis and synthesis?

1-1

- a. Examine *Jitterbug!* using supporting evidence and criteria, while considering art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines.
- b. Consider the aesthetics of the production elements in a production of *Jitterbug!* Would “less be more” even if you had a Broadway budget?
- c. Formulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of *Jitterbug!* by considering its specific purpose or intended audience.

1-2

- a. Analyze and assess *Jitterbug!* by connecting it to art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines using supporting evidence and criteria.
- b. Construct meaning in *Jitterbug!*, considering personal aesthetics and knowledge of production elements while respecting others' interpretations.
- c. Verify how *Jitterbug!* communicates for a specific purpose and audience.

1-3

- a. Research and synthesize cultural and historical information related to *Jitterbug!* to support or evaluate artistic choices.
- b. Analyze and evaluate varied aesthetic interpretations of production elements for *Jitterbug!*
- c. Compare and debate the connection between *Jitterbug!* and contemporary issues that may impact audiences.

Connecting/Synthesize
(J)

Process Component: Empathize

Anchor Standard: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists allow awareness of interrelationships between self and others to influence and inform their work.

Essential Question: What happens when theatre artists foster understanding between self and others through critical awareness, social responsibility, and the exploration of empathy?

J-1

a. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs impact *Jitterbug!*

J-2

a. Interpret *Jitterbug!* to reflect or question personal beliefs.

J-3

a. Collaborate on *Jitterbug!* by examining a critical global issue using multiple personal, community, and cultural perspectives.

Connecting/Relate
(K)

Process Component: Interrelate

Anchor Standard: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists understand and can communicate their creative process as they analyze the way the world may be understood.

Essential Question: What happens when theatre artists allow an understanding of themselves and the world to inform perceptions about theatre and the purpose of their work?

K-1

a. Explore how cultural, global, and historic belief systems affect creative choice in *Jitterbug!*

K-2

a. Integrate conventions and knowledge from different art forms and other disciplines to develop a cross-cultural *Jitterbug!*

K-3

a. Develop *Jitterbug!* to identify and question cultural, global, and historic belief systems.

Connecting/Research

(1)

Process Component: Research

Anchor Standard: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists critically inquire into the ways others have thought about and created drama processes and productions to inform their own work.

Essential Question: In what ways can research into theatre histories, theories, literature, and performances alter the way a drama process or production is understood?

L-1

- a. Research how DC Copeland applied creative processes to tell the *Jitterbug!* story using theatre research methods.
 - b. Use basic theatre research methods to better understand the social and cultural background of *Jitterbug!*
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L-2

- a. Formulate creative choices for *Jitterbug!* based on theatre research about the 1930's.
 - b. Explore how personal beliefs and biases can affect the interpretation of research data applied in *Jitterbug!* Explain how *Jitterbug!* may or may not have been different had the playwright been black.
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L-3

- a. Justify the creative choices made in *Jitterbug!* based on a critical interpretation of specific data from theatre research.
- b. Present and support an opinion about the social, cultural, and historical understanding of *Jitterbug!* based on critical research.

Resources

Historical Jitterbug! Character References

Harold Arlen: Son of a Jewish Cantor, Arlen was only in his twenties when he and his songwriting partner/lyricist Ted Koehler began writing songs for the mob's Owney Madden who owned the Cotton Club. He later went on to write the music for *The Wizard of Oz* (lyrics by E.Y. “Yip” Harburg) which included, of course, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Here's a [link](#) to a 1954 TV special featuring Arlen playing a piano while stars like Frank Sinatra sing his songs. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Cab Calloway: The coolest cat ever to have lived and another one of America's great gifts to the world. As a band leader no one had ever seen anything like him before-- or since. A true original. [Here](#) is a one-stop-place on YouTube for everything Cab. If you don't have a lot of time, make sure you watch the 1933 clip of him singing his hit *Zaz Zuh Zaz*. It's a compilation of many of his performances of his hit songs including *Minnie the Moocher* with him appearing in white tails and a white Zoot Suit. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Vincent “Mad Dog” Coll: Born Uinseann Ó Colla, this Irish-American gangster business model of kidnapping rival gangsters came back to bite him in the ass when Owney Madden made him pay the ultimate price for kidnapping his partner at the Cotton Club, George “Big Frenchy” DeMange. Coll died of multiple gunshot wounds in a phone booth at the London Chemists drug store on 8th Avenue and 23rd Street in Manhattan. He was 23-years old at the time of his death. You can read more about him [here](#).

Ella Fitzgerald: As a teenager, she was discovered in an Apollo Theater talent competition. Chick Webb hired the 18-year-old in 1935 to sing for his band. When he died in 1939, she took over managing it. You can read her amazing online bio [here](#).

Owney Madden/Big Frenchy DeMange: Mobster boss and his partner. They owned the Cotton Club. You can read their online bio [here](#).

Bill “Bojangles” Robinson: Considered by many to be the greatest of the early hoofers. [Here's](#) a one-stop-place on YouTube for everything Bojangles. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Stephanie St. Clair/Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson: Born in Martinique, the entrepreneurial St. Clair partnered with Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson to bring the illegal numbers game to Harlem where she was called Madam St. Clair (the disrespectful “Queenie in the rest of NYC). When white gangster Dutch Schultz decided to “annex” her business, a gang war broke out with over 40 dead in the process. You can read more about Madame and Bumpy [here](#).

Chick Webb: The diminutive drummer and bandleader held reign at the Savoy Ballroom from 1931 until his death in 1939. Because the Savoy loved staging “Battle of the Bands” with any swing band that might be in town, one was set up with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. When word got out, 25,000 people were lined up outside of the Savoy trying to get in while 5,000 were already squeezed inside. As it turned out, “Harlem's House Band” took on the big and powerful Benny Goodman band and put them away. The only video we could find of Chick Webb and his Orchestra is from a 1929 short called

[After Seben](#) (skip forward to 11:30) Although it only shows part of his band, the video has some other things going for it. First it stars James Barton, one of the top white vaudevillians who came out of the minstrel shows, i.e., he performed in black face (stay around to see his “eccentric” dance at the end). Secondly, the dancers are all from the Savoy Ballroom-- including George “Shorty” Snowden. Steps include the Charleston, the Cakewalk, and the Breakaway (which Snowden takes credit for inventing). Finally, you gotta admire the clothing style of the first woman dancer-- especially that way cool mini-boot. You can read Webb's online bio [here](#).

Herbert “Whitey” White: Head bouncer at the Savoy Ballroom, founder of the Jolly Fellows, a Harlem gang of the 1920's and 30's, and various Lindy dance troupes such as Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Historical Jitterbug! Scene References

Cotton Club: The legendary Cotton Club was owned and operated by gang boss Owney Madden as a way of selling his “Number One” beer that he brewed in Canada and snuck and bribed past US authorities to sell in his club during Prohibition. It was once known as “Club Deluxe” and owned by the first African American World Champion Heavyweight prize fighter Jack Johnson. Madden persuaded the champ to sell it to him by making him “an offer he couldn't refuse.” Located at 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue, it lasted from 1923 to 1935. Following the 1935 Harlem race riot it shut down in 1936 and reopened later in that year at Broadway and 48th (where Broadway and 7th Avenue meet in Manhattan). [Here's](#) a rare look of an actual Cotton Club show when the dashing young genius Duke Ellington was working there before going to Hollywood and Cab Calloway took over. [Here's](#) a 1934 YouTube link to Cab performing in what may or not be the Cotton Club-- it could have been shot in Hollywood but it has the most accurate, intimate feel for the Club. His actual performance begins around 3:24 but the prelude is also worth a watch to see his showmanship).

Lafayette Theater: To learn more about the legendary theatre, please click [here](#) and scroll down the page until you get to the Lafayette items which includes rare footage of 20-year-old Orson Welles 1936 staging of *MacBeth* with the first all African American cast.

Savoy Ballroom: When it opened in 1926 on Lenox Avenue between 140th and 141st streets in Harlem, it was the largest ballroom in the world, big enough to accommodate 5,000 people at a time. It had two band stands and its block-long wood dance floor was spring loaded (and replaced every three years). Owned by Moe Gale, a Jewish man, and managed by Charles Buchanan, a black man, it was instrumental for [breaking down racial barriers](#) where people of all colors and economic strata could dance to swing music-- despite white police trying to stop white patrons from entering in the Savoy's early days. George “Shorty” Snowden received a gilt lifetime pass for helping put it on the map when he won the Savoy's first dance marathon. After a 33-year run, the Savoy is only a legendary distant memory. [Here's](#) an interesting look at the Savoy with interviews, including one with the son of Moe Gale.

Jitterbug! Bibliography

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- [Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance](#) (1994). 508 pages. Marshall and Jean Stearns. DeCapo Press. ISBN 978-0306805530
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- [Nigger Heaven](#) (1999). 336 pages. Carl Van Vechten. University of Illinois Press. Originally released in 1926 during the Harlem Renaissance. ISBN 978-0252068607
- [Of Minnie the Moocher and Me](#) (1976) 282 pages. Cab Calloway. Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Autobiography. ISBN 978-0690010329
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